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STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

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MIDWAY LANDFILL UPDATE  
May 12, 1986

-- Reporting on the Status of Activities as of May 5, 1986 --

ARE THERE ANY HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH HAVING A GAS EXTRACTION WELL  
NEAR MY HOME?

The Department of Ecology requested an evaluation of the health effects from emissions from the off-site gas extraction wells in the Midway area. This evaluation was done by a committee of specialists from the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of Washington. Based on the available data, the results of this study indicate that there is no direct threat to the health of the people who live near gas extraction wells.

Methane is the major element of the well emissions, is not toxic and will not cause health problems. Other compounds evaluated in the study were benzene, hydrogen sulfide, methylene chloride, trichloroethylene, toluene, xylene, and acetone. These compounds were found in trace amounts and do not pose a health risk at these concentrations.

The study also recommended that further testing be done to ensure the continued health and safety of the area's residents and confirm that concentrations of compounds are not increasing over time. Continued testing is planned while the gas extraction wells remain in operation. Copies of this study are available at the Midway Information Office and at the repositories at the Kent and Des Moines Libraries.

HAVE THE READINGS IN THE METHANE PROBES CHANGED SINCE LAST WINTER?

Methane probes around the landfill, consisting of perforated plastic pipes drilled to various depths, have been monitored routinely for methane since they were installed last fall and summer. This monitoring found that methane levels in the neighborhoods east of I-5 have been substantially reduced by the extraction wells installed by Ecology and the City of Seattle. For example, the methane levels in most shallow probes (10 feet deep) east of I-5 are now below explosive levels where high gas levels were found last fall. Similarly, the methane levels in many of the deeper probes (50-100 feet deep) east of I-5 have also been dropping, although considerable methane remains trapped at depth in some areas. Additional extraction wells are needed to complete removal of this methane from areas outside the influence of the existing extraction wells.

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Probe readings from the south and west of the landfill have remained about the same as readings taken in the fall. Additional probes will be installed this spring and summer to determine the extent of the methane in these areas.

NEW FACES AT MIDWAY FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

Dan Swenson will be taking over the reins from Dave Bradley as the Department of Ecology's Site Manager for Midway Landfill. Dan has extensive experience with the Hazardous Waste Cleanup Program and with Superfund requirements for cleanup of sites like Midway Landfill. Dave, now the project manager for the Commencement Bay Superfund Project, will remain as a technical member of the Midway team. Dan's phone number in Olympia is 459-6729.

Paul Ritchie, the Department of Ecology field inspector who has been faithfully testing probes in the Midway area, won't be seen in the Midway area as often as in the past. Department of Ecology has contracted with the firm Black and Veatch to check the probes regularly. Black and Veatch's technician is Randy Rose; say "hi" when you see him. Paul will be out periodically to do independent checks of the probes so you will still see him around!